

Listen. Repeat. Learn.

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Language learning need not be difficult, but traditional methods make it difficult. Just think. When you learned your native language, you learned it by hearing it and speaking it, not by studying grammar rules. Yet, it's more profitable for companies to sell courses based on a grammar approach. But it's immensely more effective for the student to learn the language by listening to it and mimicing its sounds. In this way, the speech organs are trained to "feel" correct language usage, instead of having to rely on your memory for the correct spelling and pronunciation of the word you need.

In the beginning, you will not understand everything. But, just continue to listen and repeat, and soon you will begin to pick up the meaning of the words and phrases. Words and phrases should never be learned as a vocabulary list, but as blocks with meaning and context.

I want to share with you the rules and some suggestions for creating your own course materials because, contrary to what many people believe, you don't need a textbook!! In fact, textbooks (which are built on the grammar approach to language learning) are a hindrance to acquiring a second language. If you want to learn a second language efficiently, these are the rules you must follow:

1. To learn to speak a language correctly, you must speak it aloud. Why? Because speaking clearly at full volume is required to retrain your mind, ears, and speech organs to respond to the sounds of the new language. Studying silently (as in reading a grammar book) does nothing to retrain the senses.
2. To learn to speak a language fluently, you must think in the language. Cognitive learning is important in language learning, but it should not be the only focal point in language study (as it is in traditional language courses). The mind must be actively involved in producing correct syntax. You must make your mind think of the correct answer, even when you are studying spoken exercises. Simply reading a text is not thinking in the target language.
3. The more you speak the language aloud, the more quickly you will learn to speak fluently. Retraining your mind and speech organs takes time and lots of repetition. You will notice as you progress that your speech in the target language will at first be laborious, but later your speech will be produced in the target language much more quickly and effortlessly. Making sounds in a foreign language requires conscious effort at first, but afterwards it will become more unconscious.
4. You must never make a mistake when you are speaking. This method is a way to retrain your senses, so making mistakes only reinforces incorrect pronunciation/syntax/grammar. That learning time is wasted because then you have to go back and re-learn the correct way. The longer you speak incorrectly, the longer it will take to correctly retrain your ears, mouth, and mind.

5. Your success will be in direct proportion to the amount of time you devote to spoken language study. There is no short-cut method to learning a foreign language. You can't master a foreign language in 10 days, or even a month, but you can make significant progress in a few months' time. I recommend studying at least an hour a day. Of course, if you can't commit that much time, you should do as much as you can, but do something every day, even if it's only 20 or 30 minutes.

Keep these rules in mind as you study, and stay tuned for more helpful ideas!